

City Planning Commission 2015 Report to City Council

Planning Commission

Earl Fraley, Jr., Chairman

Ramona Austin

Andria McClellan

Matthew Hales

Dr. Dan Neumann

Nikita Houchins

Martin Thomas, Jr., Vice Chairman

Approved: February 25, 2016
Department of City Planning

Chairman's Message

February 25, 2016

To the Honorable Mayor and Council City of Norfolk, Virginia

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the City Planning Commission I am pleased to forward this summary report of activities for 2015. This was yet another busy year for the Commission, as we reviewed 158 planning and zoning applications and many of the 80 applications the Architectural Review Board (ARB) processed. We also received and discussed more than 45 topical presentations from Planning Department staff and other invited guests.

While those numbers are important in understanding the scale of our workload, I would like to take a moment to highlight the great impact we feel our work – and that of the ARB and the city staff that supports both groups – has on the City. Perhaps the most obvious impact of our efforts can be seen in the "before-and-after" images below, evidence that our focus on the form of development in the City has led to a better product in the end. These examples – one showing the influence of the City's design consultants and the other reflecting the hard work of the ARB – are just two of the many development proposals we have labored to ensure their compatibility with the surrounding neighborhoods over the past several years.

3717 Hampton Boulevard

Original proposal:



As-built:



494 St. Paul's Boulevard

Original proposal:



Final approval:



As Planning Commissioners, we have chosen to take on a substantial workload advising you on a wide variety of proposed rezonings, special exceptions, Zoning Ordinance amendments, and plan amendments. I am proud to say, however, that we Commissioners have chosen to take on an even greater responsibility, representing you and the city as a whole at numerous public workshops, civic league meetings, and one-on-one discussions about planning and development in Norfolk. I am also proud to say that your Planning Department staff has supported us in this responsibility every step of the way. Their devotion to the City makes all of our work possible.

2016 looks like it will be another busy but exciting year for the Planning Commission. From high level visioning efforts like Vision 2100 and the Military Highway UDA Study to down-in-the-weeds work on the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite, not to mention our monthly public hearings, we will definitely have a lot on our plates. We look forward to continuing to serve you in 2016, and thank you for the continued opportunity to shape the future of this great city.

Sincerely

Earl Fraley, Jr.

Chairman

CC: Marcus D. Jones, City Manager

George M. Homewood, AICP CFM, Planning Director

Norfolk City Planning Commission

The Norfolk City Planning Commission is a seven-member body, appointed by the City Council, responsible for the review of land use and zoning matters for the City of Norfolk. The Commission makes recommendations on various matters to City Council, which is ultimately responsible for making a final decision. The City Planning Commission is also responsible for the development and implementation of the City's General Plan, plaNorfolk2030.

Planning Commission members in 2015 were: Earl Fraley, Jr., Chairman; Ramona Austin; Matthew Hales; Nikita Houchins; Andria McClellan; Dr. Dan Neumann; and Martin Thomas, Jr., Vice Chairman. George Homewood, Planning Director, served as Executive Secretary to the Commission.

The Planning Commission met on 23 separate occasions in 2015, convening the second and fourth Thursday of each month, excepting November and December, where only one meeting was held to accommodate the holidays, and February, where the public hearing was canceled due to snow. Special meetings were also held in September, to review in detail the draft of the new sign ordinance and December, to review a development certificate that was time-sensitive. Staff also conducted a monthly field trip for Commissioners, providing an opportunity to visit each site on that month's agenda. The table below illustrates each Commissioner's attendance for the year.

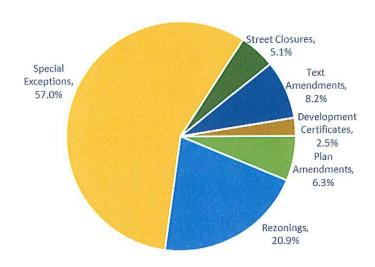
24	Meetings in Attendance	Meetings Absent
Earl Fraley, Jr., Chairman	23	0
Ramona Austin	19	4
Matthew Hales	20	3
Nikita Houchins	19	4
Andria McClellan	21	2
Dr. Dan Neumann	21	2
Martin Thomas, Jr.	21	2

In 2015, the Planning Commission processed 158 planning and zoning applications and 80 Architectural Review Board items. Additionally, the Commission considered presentations on many other topics throughout the year, including the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite, numerous *plaNorfolk2030* amendments, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Community Rating System (CRS) Program, light rail extension, the bicycle and pedestrian strategic plan, flight operations at Naval Station Norfolk, a healthy communities initiative, and an area plan for the Military Highway/Military Circle area. The Commission also began a "lunch and learn" educational series during 2015 aimed at improving the Commissioners' general knowledge of planning and zoning issues, with a particular focus on the impact of those issues on development in Norfolk.

Applications Reviewed in 2015 - Planning & Zoning

The 158 planning and zoning applications submitted to the Planning Commission 2015 represent a decrease from 182 applications the reviewed in 2014. Special applications, exception about 57% of the total, were once again by far the most common type of application processed. The following table illustrates disposition of applications processed in 2015.

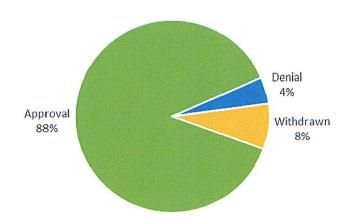
Types of Applications, 2015



	CPC Recommendation					
	Total	Percent	Approval	Denial	Withdrawn	% Approval
Plan Amendments	10	6.3%	8	1	1	80.0%
Rezonings	33	20.9%	24	4	5	72.7%
Special Exceptions	90	57.0%	86	1	3	95.6%
Street Closures	8	5.1%	6	0	2	75.0%
Text Amendments	13	8.2%	11	1	1	84.6%
Development Certificates*	4	2.5%	4	0	0	100.0%
Total	158	100.0%	139	7	12	88.0%

^{*}Includes Downtown, Granby and PCO Development Certificates, and Institutional Development Plans

Recommended Actions, 2015

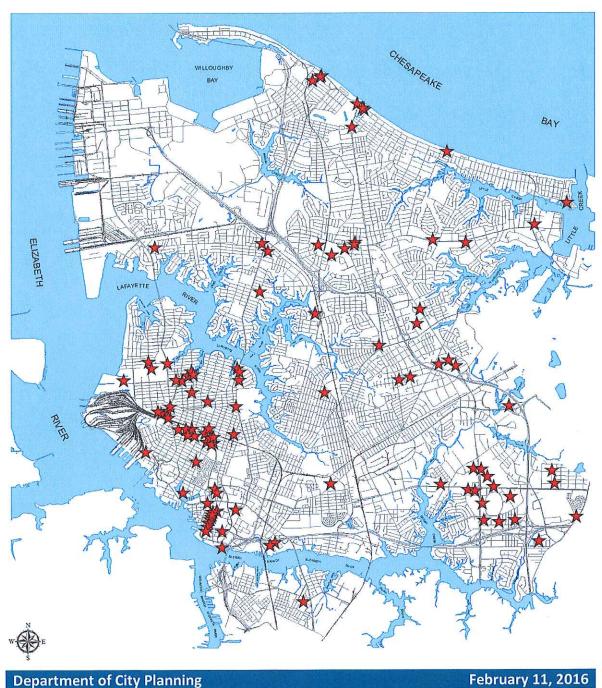


Planning Commission recommended approval on about 88% of the applications submitted in 2015, voting to recommend denial of seven items. Twelve items were withdrawn before Commission could vote on them. The 88% approval rate was a substantial decrease from the 97% rate of 2014.

Applications Reviewed in 2015 – Planning & Zoning

The map below illustrates the geographic distribution of planning and zoning applications reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2015. Not reflected on this map are the 26 items that affected either the entire City or all or part of a neighborhood.

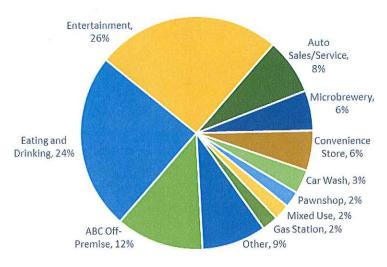
Planning and Zoning Applications, 2015



Applications Reviewed in 2015 – Special Exceptions

Special exceptions are the most common type application considered by the Planning Commission, 57% representing of agenda items in 2015. About two-thirds (68%) of those applications relate to the sale of alcoholic beverages, either for off-premise consumption, on-premise consumption, as part of an entertainment establishment, microbrewery. That high percentage continues

Special Exception Applications, 2015



recent trend. As with 2014, Commission only recommended denial of a single special exception application in 2015, far fewer than in an average year over the previous decade, while three applications were withdrawn prior to review. In total, almost 96% of special exception applications received were recommended for approval.

		CPC Recommendation				
	Total	Percent	Approval	Denial	Withdrawn	% Approval
ABC Off-premise	11	12.4%	10	0	1	90.9%
Eating and Drinking	22	24.4%	22	0	0	100.0%
Entertainment	23	25.6%	21	1	1	91.3%
Auto Sales/Service	7	7.5%	6	0	1	85.7%
Microbrewery	5	5.6%	5	0	0	100.0%
Convenience Store	5	5.6%	5	0	0	100.0%
Car Wash	3	3.3%	3	0	0	100.0%
Pawnshop	2	2.2%	2	0	0	100.0%
Mixed Use	2	2.2%	2	0	0	100.0%
Gas Station	2	2.2%	2	0	0	100.0%
Other*	8	8.9%	8	0	0	100.0%
Total	90	100.0%	86	1	3	95.6%

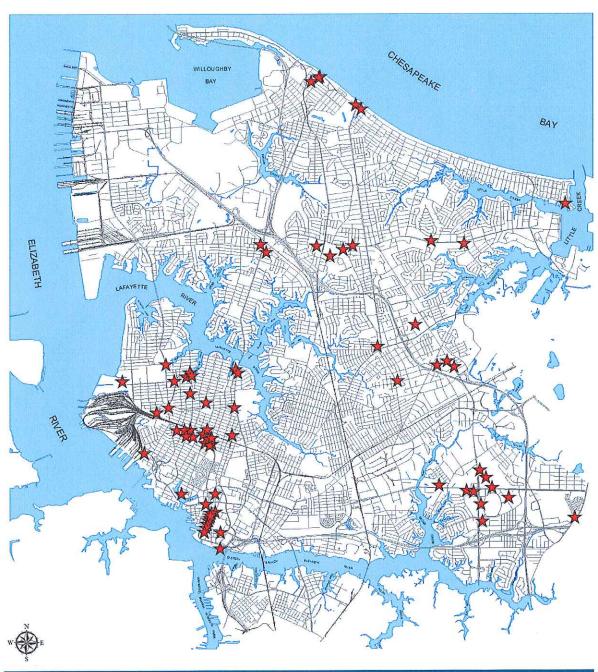
^{*}Includes special exceptions for commercial drive-through, commercial recreation center, indoor flea market, used merchandise sales, and to re-establish a nonconforming use, construct a townhouse, develop on a flag lot, and construct a fence that would not meet the typical standards.

Also of note, 11 of the 90 applications were for amendments to previously approved special exceptions. Ten of those 11 related to the sale of alcoholic beverages, meaning 12% of all special exception applications and 16% of alcohol-related applications were for operations that had already received a special exception to operate.

Applications Reviewed in 2015 – Special Exceptions

The map below illustrates the geographic distribution of special exception applications reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2015.

Special Exception Applications, 2015



Applications Reviewed in 2015 – Council Disposition

The following table reflects Norfolk City Council's actions relative to the Planning Commission's recommendations, by application type. Of the 146 items acted upon by the Planning Commission in 2015, 95.2% were recommended for approval. Similarly, 98.5% of the 140 items thus far considered by City Council were approved, though the specific items approved and denied differed slightly from Planning Commission recommendations.

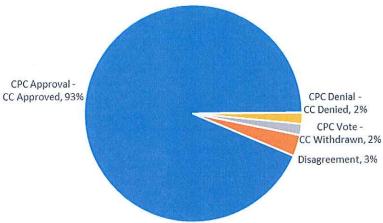
	CPC Recommendation City Council Resolution							
	Approval	Denial	% App.	Approved	Denied	Withdrawn	% App.	Pending*
Plan Amendments	8	1	88.9%	8	0	0	100.0%	1
Rezonings	24	4	85.7%	24	2	0	92.3%	2
Special Exceptions	86	1	98.8%	84	0	0	100.0%	2
Street Closures	6	0	100.0%	6	0	0	100.0%	0
Text Amendments	11	1	91.7%	11	0	0	100.0%	1
Dev. Certificates	4	0	100.0%	4	0	0	100.0%	0
Total	139	7	95.2%	138	2	0	98.5%	6

^{*} As of February 11, 2016.

In 2015, Planning Commission and City Council differed on three items. One of these, a residential rezoning, was recommended for approval by Planning Commission but ultimately denied by City Council. Two other items were recommended for denial by Planning Commission but approved by City Council — one entertainment special exception and one residential rezoning.

City Council generally with the agrees recommendations of the Planning Commission. Since 2012, City Council has followed Planning Commission's recommendation - for either approval or denial about 93% of the time. An additional 2% of items were withdrawn prior to a vote from City Council. This means that the two bodies have disagreed only

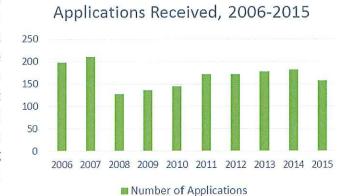
Planning Commission and City Council Actions, 2012-2015



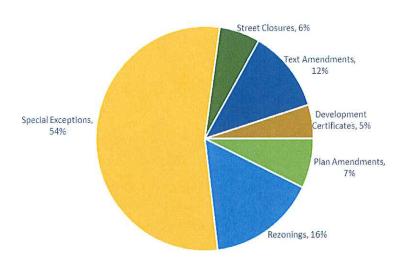
on about 3%-21 of 661- of items, several of which were modified by the applicant following the Planning Commission's vote.

Applications Reviewed – 2006-2015

The number of applications to the Planning Commission declined in 2015, with 158 compared to 182 in 2014. Nearly all of the decline is the result of sigificant drops in street closures and text amendment applications. A total of 1,673 applications have been submitted to the **Planning** Commission since 2006. average of 167 per year.

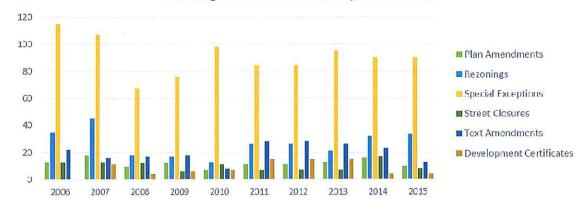


Types of Applications, 2006-2015



The special exception has been the most common application type, consistently making up at half all least of applications each year. All other types of applications vary wildly from year-toyear, with only rezonings showing a clear trend, with obvious peaks before the recession and after the recovery, and a clear bottom during the recession.

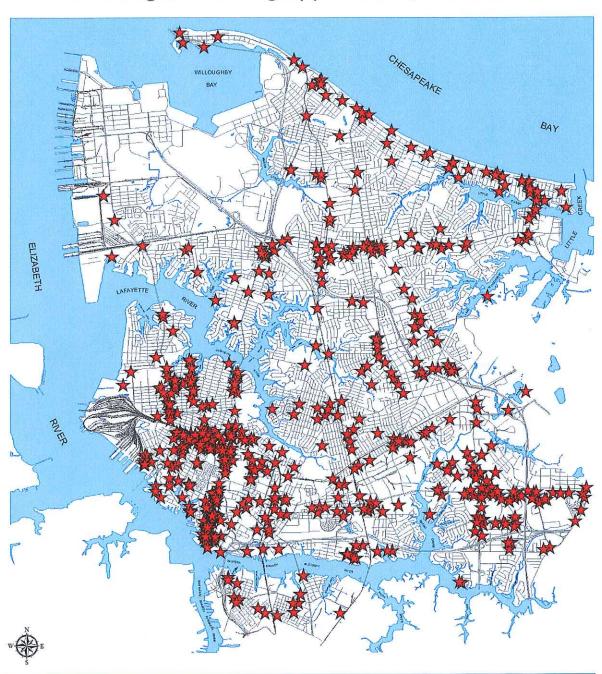
Planning Commission Activity, 2006-2015



Applications Reviewed – 2006-2015

The map below illustrates the geographic distribution of applications reviewed by the Planning Commission between 2006 and 2015.

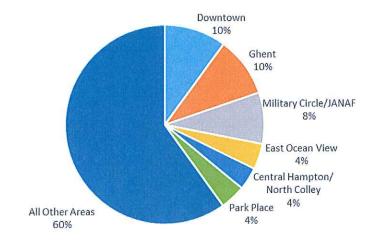
Planning and Zoning Applications, 2006-2015



Prominent Areas of Activity – 2006-2015

Over the past decade, six neighborhood areas have dominated the Planning Commission's agendas – Downtown, Ghent, the Military Circle/JANAF area, East Ocean View, Park Place, and the Central Hampton/North Colley area. Those six neighborhood

Percent of Applications by Neighborhood Area, 2006-2015

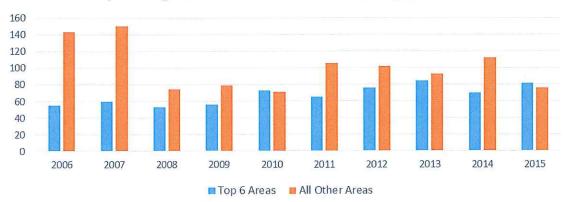


areas have accounted for 40% of all applications between 2006 and 2015, and are the only neighborhood areas to exceed 2% of the total. In 2015, they represented 52% of the total, the highest total for any single year in the period.

full of The ten years applications shows that these six neighborhood areas have remained stable, despite the broader economic conditions of the era. The beginning of the recession in 2008 shows an obvious drop in activity.

Interestingly, the decline in applications took place almost entirely outside of the top six neighborhood areas. It is clear that those neighborhood areas have played a significant role in the recovery as well. Of note, the fact that 2015 saw such a precipitous decline in applications outside these neighborhood areas is a potential area of concern going forward, as the 2015 data is remarkably similar to the 2010 data.

Top 6 Neighborhood Areas vs. All Others, 2006-2015



Architectural Review Board Items - 2015

Architectural Review Board items are different from other items reviewed by the Planning Commission, in that the Planning Commission only reviews selected ARB items. ARB has the final say on all Certificates of Appropriateness, meaning the Commission only saw 33 of 80 items reviewed by ARB in 2015. That represents a substantial decline from 2014, when 115 items were reviewed by ARB. About 87% of the items reviewed in 2015 received approval, compared to about 90% in 2014.

	Total	Percent	Approved	Denied	Withdrawn	% Approved
Ghent COA*	11	9.6%	7	2	2	63.3%
W. Freemason COA*	4	3.5%	2	1	1	50.0%
Downtown COA*	32	27.8%	29	0	3	90.6%
Private Projects	22	19.1%	22	0	0	100.0%
Public Projects	11	9.6%	10	0	1	90.9%
Total	80	100.0%	70	3	7	87.5%

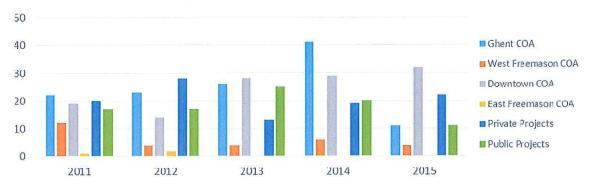
^{*} Certificate of Appropriateness



Prior to 2015 the number of Design Review/ARB items reviewed annually was steadily recovering from the bottom of the recession. That trend was reversed in 2015. A dramatic decline in Ghent COA requests is responsible for nearly all of that drop, as those requests had been the most common type of application since 2011, only to fall by almost 75% in one year. While

that drop is dramatic, it may be in part the result of improved awareness and compliance with the architectural guidelines for the Ghent historic district, as maintenance work that meets those guidelines does not require a COA.

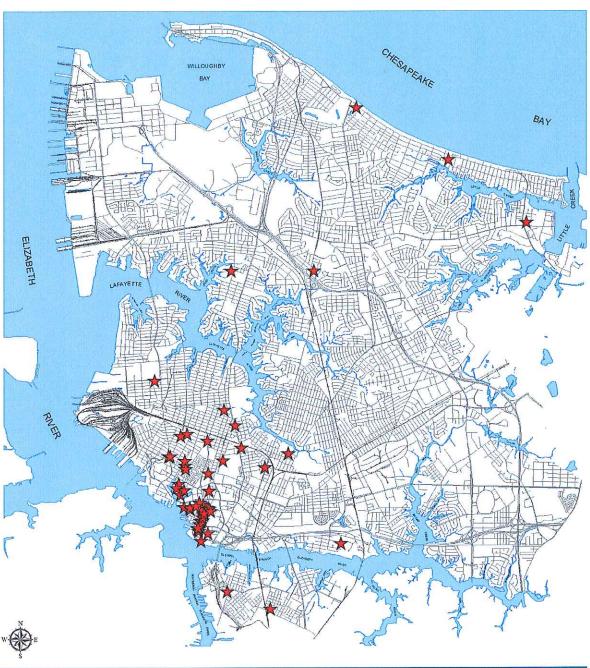
Design Review/ARB Activity, 2011-2015



Architectural Review Board Items - 2015

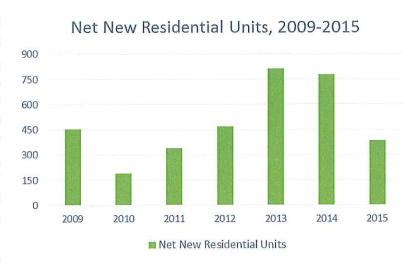
The map below illustrates the geographic distribution of the Architectural Review Board applications reviewed in 2015.

Architectural Review Board Applications, 2015



Building Permits Issued - 2015

2015 saw a 51% decline in the number of net new residential dwelling units, dropping from 779 in 2014 to 385 in 2015. The decline, however, is due to an unusually high number of demolition permits, 550, more than double any year since 2009. Permits were issued for the construction of 935 new residential units, an amount in line



with recent years. A total of 5,155 new residential units have been permitted over the past seven years, an average of 736 per year, while 1,721 units have been permitted for demolition, an average of 246 per year, an average of 490 net dwelling units.

The numbers above include several major residential projects that received building permits in 2015. These included the following projects:

First Permits Issued	Project	Location
June	180-unit apartment complex (Watermark)	7201 Newport Avenue
August	158-unit apartment building (450 Boush)	450 Boush Street
August	56-unit apartment conversion (Tazewell Hotel)	245 Granby Street
September	50-unit mixed-use building (The Banks at Berkley)	701 South Main Street
December	41-unit private dormitory building (Global Friendship House at ODU)	1241 43 rd Street

Several major non-residential projects were also permitted in 2015, including:

First Permits Issued	Project	Location
January	135,000 square foot warehouse store (Sam's Club)	741 E. Little Creek Road
March	Phase IV of a major hospital expansion (Sentara Leigh Memorial Hospital)	830 Kempsville Road
April	300-room Hilton hotel and conference center (The Main)	100 E. Main Street
March-August	Four elementary school buildings (Broad Creek/Campostella/Larchmont/Ocean View)	Various

Projects Completed – 2015

2015 once again saw the completion of multiple major projects and the opening of many new or relocated businesses. Most of these projects received some form of Planning Commission approval over the past few years and, as major construction projects often take some time to finish, finally opened during the past year. Below are several projects that were completed in 2015.







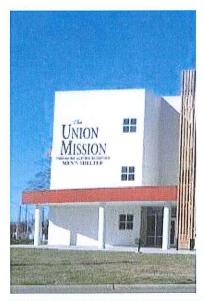






Projects Completed – 2015

Included on these pages are the new Union Mission Men's Shelter, the New School in Park Place, Glass Wheel Studio on Olney Road, and a major expansion at Bauer Compressors in the Norfolk Industrial Park. Also included are residential projects like East Beach Marina Apartments, Wainwright Apartments, and new townhouses on Granby Street, new businesses like Sam's Club, a new Towne Bank branch, and one of several recent 7-Eleven stores, and a one of several new breweries in Bold Mariner Brewing.





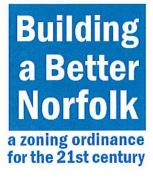






Plans and Other Projects

The Planning Department, with the support of the Planning Commission, continued to be very busy in 2015. Major efforts continue to focus on the first steps in implementing plaNorfolk2030. Those efforts include the ongoing Zoning Ordinance rewrite and the newly begun Vision 2100 planning effort. The commission also completed the first biannual review of plaNorfolk2030's implementation in 2015. Other significant 2015 accomplishments include the completion of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Strategic Plan and the approval of Certified Local Government status for the City.



Work on the drafting of a new Zoning Ordinance continued in 2015. This process will result in Norfolk's first completely new Zoning Ordinance since 1992. After kicking off the project in late 2014, staff and a team of consultants – led by Clarion Associates of Chapel Hill, NC – reviewed a thorough analysis of the existing ordinance and began the review of draft chapters of a the new ordinance. Planning Commission and an advisory committee of interested citizens, as well as the general public at certain stages, have been involved to date and will continue to play a

major role in guiding the process. 2016 will see the continued drafting of the new ordinance leading up to the anticipated completion of the project in early 2017.

Staff also began work on the Vision 2100 planning effort in late 2015. This process, expected to continue through much of 2016, will result in a very-long-term resilience-focused vision for the City, with the central goal of ensuring Norfolk's role as a great coastal community well into the 22nd Century. Early 2016 will see staff conducting a series of asset mapping exercises to identify the key elements of Norfolk that will need to be present in that distant future, which will be followed by a community visioning process in the Spring and finally by the drafting of a vision that will ultimately form a part of plaNorfolk2030.

2015 also saw the adoption of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Strategic Plan for the City. The plan, which identifies 12 strategic corridors across the City, is the first big step in establishing Norfolk as a great place for bicycling and walking. The plan was adopted as a part of *plaNorfolk2030* and will lead to the construction in 2016 of a pilot project to demonstrate the various strategies recommended in the plan.

Finally, the Planning Department, with key leadership from the Architectural Review Board, took a big step in historic preservation in 2015 by earning Certified Local Government (CLG) status. The CLG program, managed by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, recognizes local governments that have implemented a sound preservation program and enables them to participate more broadly in state and federal preservation programs, including grant awards.

Review of 2015 Work Program

The 2014 Annual Report was the first to include a work program for the upcoming year, 2015 in this case. That work program is included below, along with an indication of each project's status. Those shaded green are considered complete. Those shaded yellow are not complete but are underway and are on track for completion. Work has not begun on those shaded red. As the table indicates, the majority of the projects listed for 2015 have either been completed or are underway and on track for completion.

Project	Status
Zoning Ordinance Update – comprehensive re-write of the Zoning	Completion by
Ordinance	mid-2017
plaNorfolk2030 Annual Review – bi-annual review of plan	Complete
implementation	Complete
Flood Insurance Rate Map changes – revised citywide maps	Completion by
Flood Histialice Nate Map Changes – Tevised Citywide Haps	late 2016
Community Rating System strategy – strategy for reducing Norfolk's CRS	Completion by
rating	early 2016
Fort Norfolk ULI Study follow-up — evaluation of potential zoning changes	Part of ZO
	Update
St. Paul's area zoning study – evaluation of the zoning districts east of St.	Part of ZO
Paul's Boulevard	Update
Broad Creek area zoning study – evaluation of the zoning districts in the	Part of ZO
Broad Creek area, specifically along E. Virginia Beach Boulevard	Update
Emerging districts plan amendments – establishing policy direction for six	
emerging commercial areas (Arts District, Chelsea, Five Points, North	Complete
Colley, Riverview, and 35 th Street)	
Healthy Community plan amendments – potential new chapter in	Completion by
plaNorfolk2030	late 2016
Housing Strategy/Poverty Commission policy changes – coordination	
with City Manager's Office and NRHA to implement Poverty Commission	Complete
recommendations	
100 Resilient Cities update – status update and consideration of policy	Complete
changes	Complete
Bicycle and Pedestrian Strategic Plan – analysis of key citywide bicycle	Complete
and pedestrian policies and improvements	Complete
TIDE Extension Study – study of potential routes to connect transit to	Complete
Naval Station Norfolk	
TIDE Extension Draft Environmental Impact Statement – formal study of	Completion by
locally-preferred alternative(s)	2018
Arts District use table review and update – consideration of potential	Part of ZO
new uses and regulations for the Norfolk Arts District	Update
HRPDC Regional Visioning – staff and Commission input on a regional	
vision for Hampton Roads as part of a process led by the Hampton Roads	Complete
Planning District Commission	

Project	Status
Military Circle area plan/zoning changes – potential grant-funded project to analyze southern portion of Military Highway corridor for potential Urban Development Area designation	Completion by mid-2016
Area Planning Process – analysis of Norfolk's neighborhoods to develop list of potential area plans	Not Started
Renewable energy strategy – analysis of best practices and development of expanded policies for <i>plaNorfolk2030</i> (potential intern project)	Not Started
Public access to shoreline – analysis of best practices and development of expanded policies for <i>plaNorfolk2030</i> (potential intern project)	Not Started
West Little Creek Road parking analysis – consideration of potential strategies to address the lack of off-street parking	Complete
Public Art – discussion of Public Arts Commission processes and upcoming projects	Completion by mid-2016
Coordination efforts with Military – discussion of how staff coordinates planning efforts with representatives of local military facilities	Completion by late 2016
Coordination efforts with Colleges/Universities – discussion of how staff coordinates planning efforts with representatives of local colleges and universities	Not Started
Shore Drive Land Use/Zoning Study – an evaluation of the land uses and zoning districts in the area around Shore Drive between Little Creek Road and Pretty Lake	Part of ZO Update
Approval of Certified Local Government status	Complete
Administrative approval for some Certificates of Appropriateness	Completion by mid-2016
Architectural Review Board application guidelines – establishment of guidelines for window replacement and demolition	Completion by late-2016
Historic preservation recognition awards	Not Started
Joint Planning Commission/Economic Development Authority meeting(s)	Periodic briefing(s)
Joint Planning Commission/City Council meeting(s)	Periodic briefing(s)

2016 Planning Commission Work Program

As the Planning Commission transitions into another year, there are many projects currently underway or planned for initiation in 2016. Below is a list of projects Planning Department staff and the Planning Commission should be working on over the coming year. While this may not represent all projects and tasks the Commission works on in 2016, it is intended to be a snapshot at the beginning of the year of what activities are anticipated.

Project	Projected Project Timeframe
Zoning Ordinance Update – comprehensive re-write of the Zoning	Completion by
Ordinance	mid-2017
Vision 2100 – planning process to create a very-long term vision related	Completion by
to sustainable and resilient development patterns	mid-2016
Military Highway UDA Study – state funded consultant analysis to	Completion by
develop a transit oriented vision for the Military Circle area	mid-2016
Sand Management Plan – sand management processes to be	Completion by
incorporated into the City's beach management plans	early-2016
Denby Park Plan Amendments – plaNorfolk2030 amendments to clarify	Completion by
land use policies for the Denby Park neighborhood	early-2016
Healthy Communities Strategy – plaNorfolk2030 amendments to	Completion by
incorporate healthy living strategies into City's long-term plans	late-2016
Community Rating System strategy – strategy for improving Norfolk's CRS	Completion by
rating	early-2016
Complete Streets Policies – development of a process, policy, and	Completion by
guidelines for implementing complete streets citywide	early-2016
Strategy for Neighborhoods in Transition – review of zoning approach to	Completion by
neighborhoods experiencing economic change	late-2016
Emergency/Re-Build Ordinance – Ordinance or Code language regulating	Completion by
how properties may be re-built in a more resilient manner	late-2016
Development Guide – document for developers on requirements and	Completion by
steps through city approval processes	late-2016
New Permit Management Tracking System – implementation of	Completion by
departmental work tracking system	early-2016
TIDE Extension Draft Environmental Impact Statement – formal study of	Completion by
locally-preferred alternative(s)	2018
Area Planning Process – analysis of Norfolk's neighborhoods to develop	Completion by
priority list for potential area plans	late-2016
Renewable energy strategy – analysis of best practices and development	Completion by
of expanded policies for plaNorfolk2030 (potential intern project)	late-2016
Public Art – discussion of Public Arts Commission processes and	Completion by
upcoming projects	mid-2016
Public access to shoreline – analysis of best practices and development of	Completion by
expanded policies for plaNorfolk2030 (potential intern project)	late-2016

Project	Projected Project Timeframe
Coordination efforts with Colleges/Universities – discussion of how staff coordinates planning efforts with representatives of local colleges and universities	Completion by late-2016
Administrative approval for some Certificates of Appropriateness	Completion by mid-2016
Architectural Review Board application guidelines – establishment of guidelines for window replacement and demolition	Completion by late-2016
Historic preservation recognition awards	Completion by late-2016
Coordination efforts with Military – discussion of how staff coordinates planning efforts with representatives of local military facilities	Periodic briefing(s)
Joint Planning Commission/Economic Development Authority meeting(s)	Periodic briefing(s)
Joint Planning Commission/City Council meeting(s)	Periodic briefing(s)